المجلس الإسلامي

Islamic Council

Statement by Mr Salem Azzam, Secretary General, Islamic Council, to a press conference held at 3 p.m. on 3 July 1989 at the London International Press Centre

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you to this press conference on the Crisis in the Sudan.

Sudan, as you know, is Africa's largest country. It is also very important strategically as it has common borders with eight African countries.

With large tracts of fertile land and enough water resources, the country has great potential in the field of agriculture, cattle farming and associated industries. Indeed, not long ago Sudan was considered to be a potential bread basket for the entire region. The country is also endowed with rich mineral resources, such as oil, gold and copper.

But due to prolonged internal strife, not only have these resources remained grossly underdeveloped but even the usual food production has suffered badly. During the recent years, several hundred thousand people have died due to hunger and starvation. Add to this the hundreds of thousands who have died in the civil war and the magnitude of the tragedy falls into focus. The strife has exacted a terrible price and must come to an end.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To complicate the situation, a group of Army officers staged a coup d'état on 30 June against the democratic government of Mr Sadiq al Mahdi, which had been elected by free and fair elections. Having seized power, the military has dissolved all political parties and institutions, confiscated their assets, suspended the constitution, and detained many people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is unfortunate that considerable confusion and misunderstanding surround

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the origins of the conflict in the Sudan, and the reason for its escalation. Today, we have with us a team of eminent Sudanese who are committed to exert their best efforts to bring the conflict to an end and usher in an era of peace, understanding and reconciliation among the sections of Sudanese society.

Before I introduce members of the Sudanese panel, I would express the hope that the media here today will make the true facts known to the public and thus help to resolve the crisis.

Four members of the panel will speak in turn, each for a few minutes, after which their other two colleagues and they will be happy to answer questions from the floor. May I ask questioners to please state clearly their names and the organisations represented.

The distinguished members of the panel are:

1- General (Rtd) Joseph Lagu

He is the leader of Anyanya I, co-signatory of the Addis Ababa Accord, former Vice-President of the Republic of Sudan, currently roving Ambassador.

2- Mr Mathew Abur

He is co-founder of Anyanya II and President of the Council for the Southern Sudan, former Minister of Education and Speaker of the Southern Region Assembly.

3- Mr Phillip Obanj

He Is founder of the Sudan African National Union and former Commissioner of Upper Nile Province.

4- Mr Ali Al-Haj Mohammed

A former Minister of Commerce, and executive member of the Islamic National Front.

5- Mr Andrew Leek

Advisor for Economic Affairs for the South.

6- Mr Mohammed Abbas Faqiri

A senior member of the Ummah Party.